



January 29, 2015

Montana House of Representatives
Fish Wildlife and Parks Committee
Chairman Kelly Flynn
Committee Members

Honorable Committee Members,

My name is Ed Beall, I am majority owner at Capital Sports in Helena. We are an outdoor hunting store that employees 30+ and have been in operation since 1970. We are a FWP license agent.

I recently served on the Fish and Wildlife Licensing and Funding Citizen Advisory Council.

First I want to express my support for HB609 which addresses the needs of funding the FWP for a Four year period.

Second I want to express my support for any effective enhancement of the funding of the Block Management Program that will increase the opportunities of hunters in Montana. Before you are HB268 which creates a block management stamp for \$25 in an opt out manner and HB269 which increases the hunter access fee on a conservation license from \$2 to \$8. In concept I would support either or a combination of the two.

During the time that I served on the License Funding Council the most frequent comment, complaint and request I heard from hunters, was not about the possibility of raising license fees....but about the need to create better "opportunities" for hunting. Access has become harder, there are more places closed, getting an elk out is difficult, its harder for kids now, its tougher for seniors, etc. I queried hunters and almost every single one indicated support for paying more for better access and quality opportunity.

I include the following comments for your consideration:

1. HB609 calls for creation of a "base hunting license", then moves the current \$2 hunter access fee to that base hunt license away from the current conservation license. This change if adopted in HB609 would require a change to the process and description in both HB268 and HB269.

HB 269
Beall
(10)

2. CREATE A CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL ON BLOCK MANAGEMENT.
Whether or not you increase the funding to Block Management this session, I would suggest that *this committee* consider proposing the creation of an interim Citizens Advisory Council, similar to the License Funding Council, to consider the needs and intricacies of a better Block Management program for the future. To address what will lead to greater participation, cooperation and success of the current program. Let this councils findings be actionable and go on to FWP the EQC or the PLPW, but take action.
3. CURRENT BLOCK MANAGEMENT PROGRAM SHOULD ESTABLISH QUANTIFIABLE CRITERIA on which it bases its payment to the cooperator. Those listed on HB269 are a good start but certainly not complete. Those criteria could have points that add up to the percentage that would determine the payment to the landowner. The potential points likely would exceed 100, but the payment would max out at 100% or the \$ maximum allowed.

Landowner/Hunter relations are a critical component of the hunting heritage of Montana. To continue on we must foster a greater understanding between hunters and landowners and create better relationships. Hunter access may be the vehicle to accomplish this.

Thank you for your time and work. Sincerely, Ed Beall

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ed Beall". The signature is fluid and written in dark ink.